

Message Text

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FOL TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM CAIRO DTD 27 APR DTG

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG UR LY

SUBJ: COMMENTS ON SOVIET MESSAGE TO ARABS AND SADAT'S

"ORAL MESSAGE"

REF: (A) CAIRO 6065, (B) CAIRO 7066

1. JUDGING FROM FAHMY'S COMMENTS (REFTELS), EGYPTIANS
ARE DISTURBED ABOUT SOVIET MESSAGE AND WHAT IT PORTENDS,
BUT ARE ALSO PREPARED TO BE SCRAPPY ABOUT IT.

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UNLESS THEY RECEIVE SOME KIND OF AN APOLOGY OR EXPLANATION,
WHICH SEEMS UNLIKELY, SOVIET/EGYPTIAN RELATIONS ARE LIKELY
TO HIT A NEW LOW--IF THAT IS POSSIBLE. ALTHOUGH THERE
HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS SOVIET/EGYPTIAN TENSIONS THESE PAST
THREE YEARS, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT FAHMY HAS
CHARACTERIZED THE SOVIETS AS AN "ENEMY" AND IS TALKING
ABOUT REFUSING TO ACCEPT THEM AS CO-CHAIRMAN AT GENEVA.

VALUE OF SUCH A TACTIC SEEMS DOUBTFUL, SINCE IT WOULD SEEM TO BE SELF-DEFEATING. MOREOVER, SOVIETS (AND EGYPTIANS) MUST BE AWARE THAT THEY CANNOT BE DEALT OUT OF GENEVA UNILATERALLY BY THE EGYPTIANS. NEVERTHELESS, FAHMY SOMEHOW SEEMS TO FEEL THAT THIS IS A THREAT WHICH WILL MAKE THE SOVIETS SQUIRM.

2. SO FAR AS LIBYA IS CONCERNED, SOVIET MESSAGE CONFIRMS EGYPTIAN FEARS. THEY HAVE WATCHED WITH CONCERN INCREASING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN LIBYA AND VIEW IT AS PART OF SOVIET EFFORT GAIN INFLUENCE IN AFRICA AFTER USSR SETBACKS OF PAST THREE YEARS IN ME. SOME ELEMENTS IN TOP EGYPTIAN LEADERSHIP ARE CONVINCED THAT UNLESS QADHAFI CAN SOMEHOW BE BROUGHT DOWN IN NEXT TWO MONTHS OR SO, SOVIETS WILL BE PERMANENTLY ENTRENCHED IN LIBYA. SOVIET EFFORT TO APPEAR AS A PROTECTOR OF QADHAFI RILES THEM, BUT APART FROM THEIR WELL-WORN POLICY OF PUBLIC "EXPOSURE" OF QADHAFI AS A SOVIET "STOOGES," THERE IS LITTLE THEY CAN DO ABOUT IT. THEY HAVE, OF COURSE, BUILT UP MILITARY CAPABILITY ALONG LIBYAN BORDER TO A POINT WHERE A SURGICAL STRIKE AGAINST A LIBYAN GUERRILLA BASE OR BASES IS PROBABLY FEASIBLE. SADAT MUST STILL GIVE THE GO-AHEAD FOR ANY SUCH ACTION AND, TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, HAS NOT YET DONE SO. OUR BEST ESTIMATE CONTINUES TO BE THAT, IF THE EGYPTIANS DO DECIDE TO MOVE, IT WILL BE SOMETIME IN MAY. WHATEVER HAPPENS, SADAT IS UNLIKELY TO BE DETERRED BY THE THINLY VEILED SOVIET THREAT. ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS MORE LIKELY TO SPUR HIM ON TO THE NEED FOR MORE EXPEDITIOUS ACTION IN TRYING TO UNSEAT QADHAFI. WHETHER SADAT HAS THE ASSETS TO
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DO SO IS DOUBTFUL.

3. AS WILL BE NOTED IN SEPTTEL, THE EGYPTIAN DEMARCHE WAS ALSO USED AS A PEG TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE EGYPTIAN ARMS REQUEST FOR AFRICA.
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